

AN HISTORIC AND AESTHETIC INVESTIGATIVE STUDY
OF LACE DESIGNS

A THESIS

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PREFACE

There is still some distinction between Machine-made and Hand-made Lace. I will suppose that distinction so far done away with that, a pattern once invented, you can spin Lace as fast as they now do thread. Everybody then might wear not only Lace collars, but Lace gowns. Do you think that, when everybody could wear them, everybody would be proud of wearing them? A spider may perhaps be rationally proud of his own cobweb, even though all the fields in the morning are covered with the like, for he made it himself; but suppose a machine spun it for him? Suppose all the gossamer were Nottingham made? If you think of it, you will find the whole value of Lace as a possession depends on the fact of its having a beauty which has been the reward of industry and attention. That the thing is itself a price--a thing everybody cannot have. That it proves, by the look of it, the ability of the maker; that it proves, by the rarity of it, the dignity of its wearer--either that she has been so industrious as to save money, which can buy, say, a piece of jewellery, or gold tissue, or of fine Lace--or else that she is a noble person, to whom her neighbours concede as an honour the privilege of wearing finer dress than they. If they all choose to have Lace too--if it ceases to be a price, it becomes, does it not, only a cobweb? The real good of a piece of Lace, then, you will find, is that it should show first, that the designer of it had a pretty fancy; next, that the maker of it had fine fingers; lastly, that the wearer of it has worthiness or dignity enough to obtain what it is difficult to obtain, and common sense enough not to wear it on all occasions.

Ruskin

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The proposed problem, as set forth in this study, was the historical, technical, and aesthetic research of lace designs throughout history.

Purpose of This Study

It was the purpose of this study to develop, through historical and technical research, aesthetic sensibilities for creating contemporary, design statements in lace.

Justification for This Study

Although the researcher was aware of numerous books and periodicals which concerned themselves either with the history of lace or with the techniques of lace-making, the researcher had found that literature concentrating on the fundamental design principles, inseparable from lace itself, was unavailable.

Background

The researcher became interested in lace during a trip abroad, where said researcher had the rare

opportunity of observing nuns, belonging to The Convent of the Good Shepherd in Limerick, Ireland, making the lace which derives its name from the city wherein it is made.

During that stay abroad, as well as during a subsequent visit, the researcher was able to briefly study one of the world's definitive lace collections, housed in The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.

After those preliminary experiences, the researcher was introduced to the technical aspects of this art in 1977 upon the discovery of an antique bobbin lace "machine" patented in 1907, in the collection of the Ramsey County and St. Paul Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota. While in the employment of that establishment the researcher became proficient in bobbin lace.

The researcher has attended a seminar on the history of lace sponsored by the Minneapolis Museum of Art.

Presently, the researcher has the privilege of cataloging The Eppler Lace Collection owned by the Museum of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Denton, Texas.

Delimitations

The following delimitations serve as a guideline for the scope of this study:

1. The researcher has incorporated in this study only those laces described as bobbin or point laces, or as a combination thereof.
2. The researcher has used in this study threads only of natural components which are commercially available.
3. The researcher has used white, natural, or colored threads.
4. The researcher has used the following equipment:
 - a) bobbins; b) bobbin lace pillow; c) pins; d) thread;
 - e) needles; f) parchment; g) backing fabric; and
 - h) patterns.
5. The researcher has exhibited at least five works in one of the Texas Woman's University galleries during the month of May, 1981.

Methodology

1. The researcher has studied the relevant literature available in the Texas Woman's University Library Collection, as well as that literature available through interlibrary loan.
2. The researcher has visited those museums in the metroplex which had either published materials about, or documented collections of lace.

3. After available information was collected, the researcher prepared samples of selected patterns and lace techniques.
4. Using the prepared samples, the researcher has created contemporary design statements in lace.

Definition of Terms

À Jours (Jour): A French term meaning window or opening.

In lace it means the openwork patterns of fancy stitches which elaborate the design. (The Lace Book, p. 161)

Allovers: A term relating to the design which covers a net as distinguished from fragmentary motifs of borders or stripes. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 10)

Appliqué: A term which (a) means that motives for the design, made by hand or machine, are sewn by hand on net. (b) means that batiste is sewn in patterns (by hand or machine) on net; the cloth not included in the design is cut away so that the net shows as a ground. (The Lace Book, p. 161)

Artificial Lace: A term applied to a lace that is not woven or embroidered, produced entirely by chemical methods, frequently made of celluloid or pulp. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 18)

- Bars:** The connecting threads ornamenting open spaces in lace, sometimes called bridges, claires, coxcombs, legs and ties. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 18)
- Bobbinet:** The net made by the bobbin as distinguished from the needle. Modern bobbinet is a machine imitation. There are several forms of net. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 23)
- Bobbins:** The small elongated wooden or bone reels on which the thread is wound for the purpose of lace-making. (A History of Hand-made Lace, p. 207)
- Bobbin Lace:** Lace made on a pillow with bobbins. (The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. 1, p. 959)
- Bone Lace:** The name first given to bobbin-made lace on account of the bones of fishes and splinters of the bones of animals being used instead of pins, and the bobbins being frequently of carved bone. (A History of Hand-made Lace, p. 175)
- Buttonhole Stitch:** One of the chief stitches in needle-made lace; also known as Close Stitch, Point Noné, and Punto a Feston. (A History of Hand-made Lace, p. 207)
- Cordonnet:** A term for a heavier thread used to outline and emphasize the design in some laces. (The Lace Book, p. 161)

Dentelle: The French term for lace. Laces were known as dentelles in France at the end of the Sixteenth Century; before that time they were called passements. (A History of Hand-made Lace, p. 144)

Edge: There are two edges to lace: the outer, which in trimmings and flounces is either scalloped or ornamented with picôts; and the engrêlure or footing used to sew the lace on to the material it is to decorate. (A History of Hand-made Lace, p. 209)

Engrêlure: A French term applied to the heading used in finishing the straight edge of many laces. (The Lace Book, p. 161)

Entre Deux: A French term meaning either insertion or banding. (The Lace Book, p. 161)

Grounds: Backgrounds to the pattern. The bride grounds are the grounds formed of brides connecting the patterns. The réseau ground (identical with rezel or rezeuil) is the net, of which there are many varieties, both of needlepoint and bobbin, hand and machine. With the invention of the machine for making bobbinet, the latter part of the Eighteenth Century, réseau making was revolutionized and some of the finest of laces were the appliqué laces which were produced by applying the most exquisite

details to a machine net body or "ground." (The Lace Dictionary, p. 70)

Hand-run: A term applied when (a) the cordonnet has been sewn on by hand-operated machine as in some Alençon. (b) the thread for the design or cordonnet or both has been woven into the net with a needle as in hand-made Breton. (The Lace Book, p. 161)

Insertion: A strip of lace or other ornamented texture inserted as a band decoration between other materials. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 75)

Lace: The name applied to as ornamental open work of threads of flax, cotton, silk, gold, or silver, and occasionally of mohair or aloe fibre. Such threads may either be looped or plaited or twisted together in one of three ways: (a) with a needle, when the work is distinctively known as "needlepoint lace"; (b) with bobbins, pins and a pillow or cushion, when the work is known as "pillow lace"; and (c) by machinery, when imitations of both needlepoint and pillow lace patterns are produced. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, ninth edition, Vol. XIV, p. 183)

Motive: A unit, geometrical in form or irregular, which may be joined with other motives to make lace or may be used as an inset in fancy linens, lingerie, etc. (The Lace Book, p. 161)

- Needlepoint Lace: Lace made with the needle, as opposed to bobbin lace. (The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. VII, p. 73)
- Parchment: That used as a background for the pattern which is pricked out for point lace. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 112)
- Picot (Purl, Pearl): A loop, or loops, used to decorate an edge in a lace pattern or a bar in the ground. (A Lace Book, p. 161)
- Pillow Lace: Lace made on a pillow with bobbins. In pillow lace the pattern is sometimes worked first, fixed upon a pillow and the ground worked in afterwards. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 115)
- Point: The term Point relates to needlestitch, but it is applied incorrectly to other forms. The words "Point de" are applied frequently with mere geographic reference indicating a point lace of a certain place. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 117)
- Réseau: The ground of a lace as distinguished from the design. (The Lace Book, p. 162)
- Run: A lace which has a thread run in with a needle through the net like a darning, by hand; where done by machinery it consists of a chain stitch. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 128)

Roue: A French word for wheel. In lace, it means the single narrow row of openwork surrounding the design, as in Valenciennes.

Tape: In the Sixteenth Century many fine Flemish laces were made by manipulating a tape which itself was of lacey construction, hand-made. Today, most of the tape laces are of machine made tape. (The Lace Dictionary, p. 138)

Tambour: An embroidery in chain stitch made by hand with a crochet hook or by a Bonnaz machine. It may be used alone as a design on net or it may be used to outline as appliqué of cloth or net. (The Lace Book, p. 162)

Toilé: The technical term for both the design and its texture. (The Lace Book, p. 162)

CHAPTER II

LACE

Introduction

The researcher is aware of the terra incognita which generally surrounds lace and its history. Nonetheless, digressions, by way of excessive explanations, have been purposely omitted, striving to maintain the attention of this paper on lace designs only directly in the context of historical art theory.

It is important to emphasize that an historical approach to this study is not the only one possible. Lace designs were extensively variable between types: whether bobbin or needle, these types being subdividable by techniques; between localities: both national and regional; and between threads: whether gold, linen, silk, or cotton. It was these combinations, with the addition of the many facets of history and finally, the executer, which influenced the breath, scope, and sensitivity which exist in lace designs.

The researcher has taken some liberty in using only those pictorial illustrations of lace which best exemplify artistic preferences held during the following

periods of art: Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neo-Classical, Victorian, and only very briefly, Modern.

As in all the arts, minor or otherwise, these categorical generalizations can become technically inaccurate. Patterns designed with the Renaissance prescription of taste, were used in the Baroque, copied in the Rococo, and rearranged and reused innumerable times. Nevertheless, this admittance does not negate the fact that there finally did exist elements of taste, which waxed and waned in lace, as in other arts, through the changing centuries. It is with these generalized changes this paper is concerned.

Before, however, beginning to discuss the direct relationship of lace designs to a portion of art history, the researcher feels compelled to introduce, if only with little specifics, the significance which the now "dead" art of lace had to history, as well as our forefathers, and to include by way of antidotes, attitudes which have long been neglected or forgotten as has lace itself.

This hopefully concise and greatly condensed history begins with the Sixteenth Century, turns morally ill with the French Revolution, and finally dies at the commence of World War I; only faint and infrequent ghosts remain today.

History

The history of lace has become obscured, both in regards to the time of its origin and the place of its birth. The specimen's fragility has vastly increased the difficulty of its tracing; as have the ancient languages of Chaldaic, Hebrew, and Arabic, which have failed to differentiate between distinct varieties of needlework: embroidery, network, and lace.¹

Early lace-like borders or inserts are tracable to many countries. The Egyptians, the Armenians, the Scandinavians, the Circassians, and the Arabs are all known to have executed network and twisted threads of gold, silver, and silk; the distant ancestors of lace.² However, the history of hand-made lace in its truest form, begins in the Sixteenth Century.

Drawn work and cut work, known and widely practiced in the Middle Ages, were forms of embroidery which developed into point lace. Drawn work usually consisted of loosely woven linen fabric from which certain threads were drawn out and others left. Upon, as well as between, these threads, the needle was worked. Cut work consisted of an arrangement of crossing and interlacing

¹Emily F. Jackson, A History of Hand-made Lace (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, c., 1900), p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 5.

threads upon a small frame. A fine piece of cloth, called quintain, was gummed to the threads and with a needle, parts of the pattern were sewn to this cloth; these parts remained thick. The superfluous cloth was then cut away. These two methods are punto a reticella and punto tagliato, respectively.¹

Punto in aria, stitches in air, a description referring to technique rather than design, is considered the first truly free needle lace.

Pillow lace may also be traced to a very early form of embroidery. Colored silk threads were used on a network of small mesh squares. In the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries this work was known in ecclesiastical circles as opus filatorium or opus araneum. During the early part of the Sixteenth Century this work became known as punto a maglia quadra in Italy and as lakis in France.²

Although several different countries claim the honor of introducing lace into the world, most notably France, Italy, Spain, and Flanders, the invention of needle lace is generally credited to Northern Italy and bobbin lace to Flanders. It is in these two countries

¹Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., s.v. "Lace." by Alan Cole.

²Ibid.

lace-making and lace-wearing first achieved its highest standards.

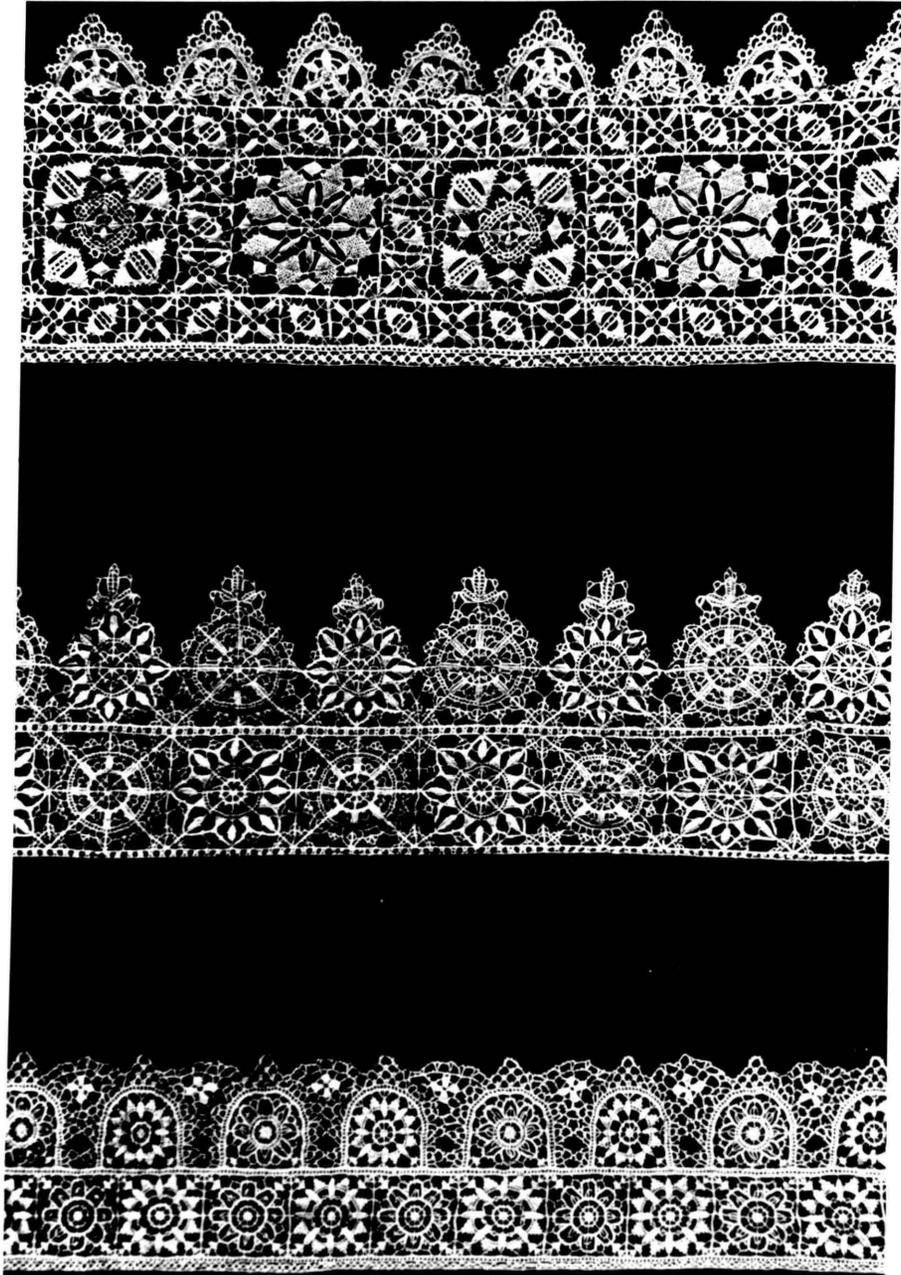
Lacemaking traditionally began under the supervision of, and was supported by, the Catholic Church. Indeed, in Italy and Spain, where the Church's influence was paramount, this work was confined to monastic orders long into the Sixteenth Century.¹ Why the finest and most intricate laces were produced under the auspices of the Church is circumstantially evident, for time was no object and the fabric could be studied and enrichment endlessly devised for the service of God.

Amongst the stores of gold-embroidered chasubles, gem-studded crosses, mitres and cups, where masses of diamonds sparkle on historic reliquaries, and pearls, emeralds, and rubies enrich even the cups and platters used in the service of the Church, the exquisite grace and delicacy of the lace appear all the more pronounced, and this miracle of patient industry, built up from the simplest material, a little thread, rivals in startling beauty objects which are made with the costliest and most precious materials the world can produce.²

Nevertheless, lace quickly secured public attention and its appearance as a personal adornment began to conspicuously emblemize social supremacy. In 1599

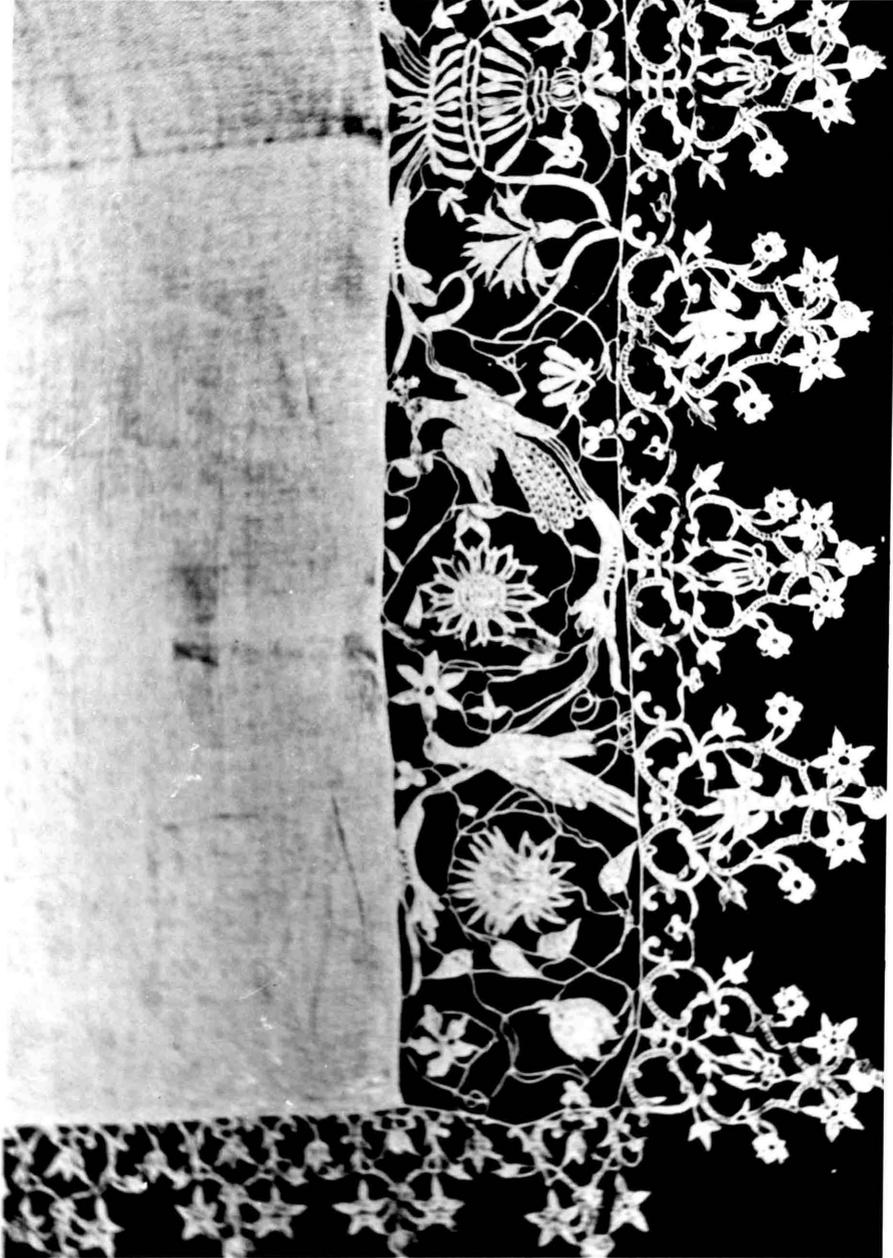
¹Jackson, History of Hand-made Lace, p. 56.

²Ibid., p. 57.



SOURCE: Mary Eirwen Jones, The Romance of Lace (London: Spring Books, n.d.), p. 43.

Fig. 1. Italian reticella lace of the late Sixteenth Century. Housed in the Victorian and Albert Museum.



SOURCE: George Leland Hunter, Decorative Textiles
(Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company,
1918), p. 84.

Figure 2. Punto in aria. Late Fifteenth Century.

Ben Johnson wrote, "men thought nothing of turning 4-5 hundred acres of their best land into three trunks of apparel,"¹ and in 1630 a French courtier boasted that he wore some "thirty-two acres of the best vineyard . . . around his neck."²

Such extravagance did not pass, however, uncontested.

I will not be silent, and fail to mention the time lost these last years in the manufacture of cadnetas, a work of thread combined with gold and silver; this extravagance and excess reached such a point that hundreds and thousands of ducats were spent in this work, in which, besides destroying the eyesight, wasting away the lives, and rendering consumptive the women who worked it, and preventing them from spending their time with more advantage to their souls, a few ounces of thread and years of time were wasted with so unsatisfactory a result.³

Although there were sumptuary edicts which forbade or restricted the use of these metal laces in Italy, Spain, France, and England; in every country in fact in which they were used except Russia, the oppression under which most lacemakers worked, received much less attention and no legislation until centuries later.

¹Ibid., p. 32.

²Christa C. Mayer, "Lace and the Male Ego," Antiques Magazine (January-February 1968): p. 90.

³Bury Palliser, History of Lace (London: Sampson Low, Martin and Company, Ltd., 1902), p. 95, citing Father Fr. Marcos Antonio de Campos, Microscosmia y gobieryo Universal del Hombre Crestiano, 1592.



SOURCE: Emily F. Jackson, A History of Hand-made Lace (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, c., 1900), Frontpiece.

Fig. 3. Portrait of a Lady, painted by Ravesteyn (1580-1665). The ruff is trimmed with Guipure point Gótico.

Lacemakers often worked in underground cellars from four in the morning until eight at night, "scarcely earning their tenpence a day,"¹ for the labour involved in making some laces was so great that workers could complete no more than 1 1/2 inches per day. It took 10 months working 15 hours a day to complete a pair of men's ruffles. Near blindness before the age of thirty was believed not uncommon.

Yet another pearl under which the lacemaker suffered was the inhalation of lead used to "powder" the lace concealing the soil of the maker's hand, which was nearly unavoidable, but considered unacceptable.

Due to the excess importation of Italian laces into France, in 1626 foreign laces were declared contraband. As this act had little long lasting effect, Colbert established the lace manufacture of point de France in 1665 and his success caused a general development of lace throughout Europe.

When in 1792 the French nobility and aristocracy were sent to the scaffold, many lacemakers followed, for the lace industry was considered the aristocrat of all textile manufacturers. It was for such standing that it perhaps faded and finally died.

¹Ibid., p. 233.

All frivolous and exaggerated fashions of the Old Regime and the vanities of personal adornment which once prevailed Europe seem, at least with men, to be quite contrary to the serious and vital tendencies of modern times. As a consequence the overweening and ostentatious habits of aristocrats in the past cast for us a certain shadow of discredit on the time-honored, exquisite and useful arts of making laces, and weaving expensive fabrics. And have suffered somewhat in consequence of the trivial, idle and puerile memories connected with lace collars and other fopperies rendered odious to our people through the selfish and inglorious careers pursued by famous men of the 17th and 18th centuries.¹

Technique

Needlepoint lace is made upon a patterned parchment. This parchment is pricked and stitched to glazed cotton or gassed linen, either green or blue in color. Upon the lines which have been drawn on the parchment, two threads are laid. These threads are fastened to the parchment and linen by small stitches made with needle and coutching thread. When this is completed, a compact covering of thread in button-hole stitch is sometimes cast upon the two outlining threads. The toilé is worked next. Between the leading lines of the pattern may be inserted a réseau or brides, so that the pattern is held together. When all is finished, a knife or scissors is passed between the parchment and the fabric, cutting

¹William Laurel Harris, "Laces and their Affiliation with Architecture," American Architect (November 1917), p. 364.



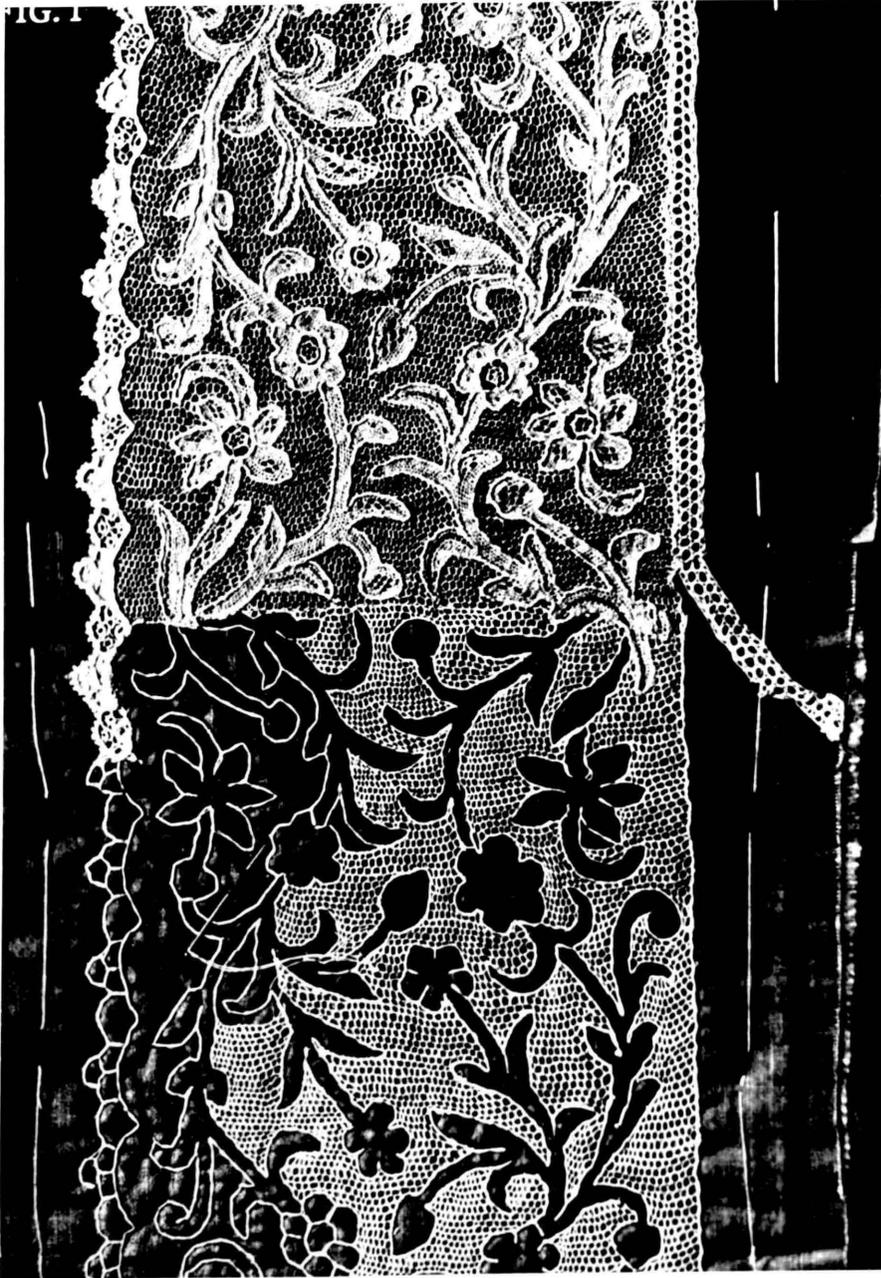
SOURCE: L. V. van der Meulen-Nulle, Lace (London: Merlin Press, c., 1963), plate 21.

Fig. 4. Portrait of Marie Amelie, Queen of France, 1842. The lace is most likely Appliqué de Bruxelles or Valenciennes.

those couthing stitches and so releasing the lace itself from its patterned parchment.

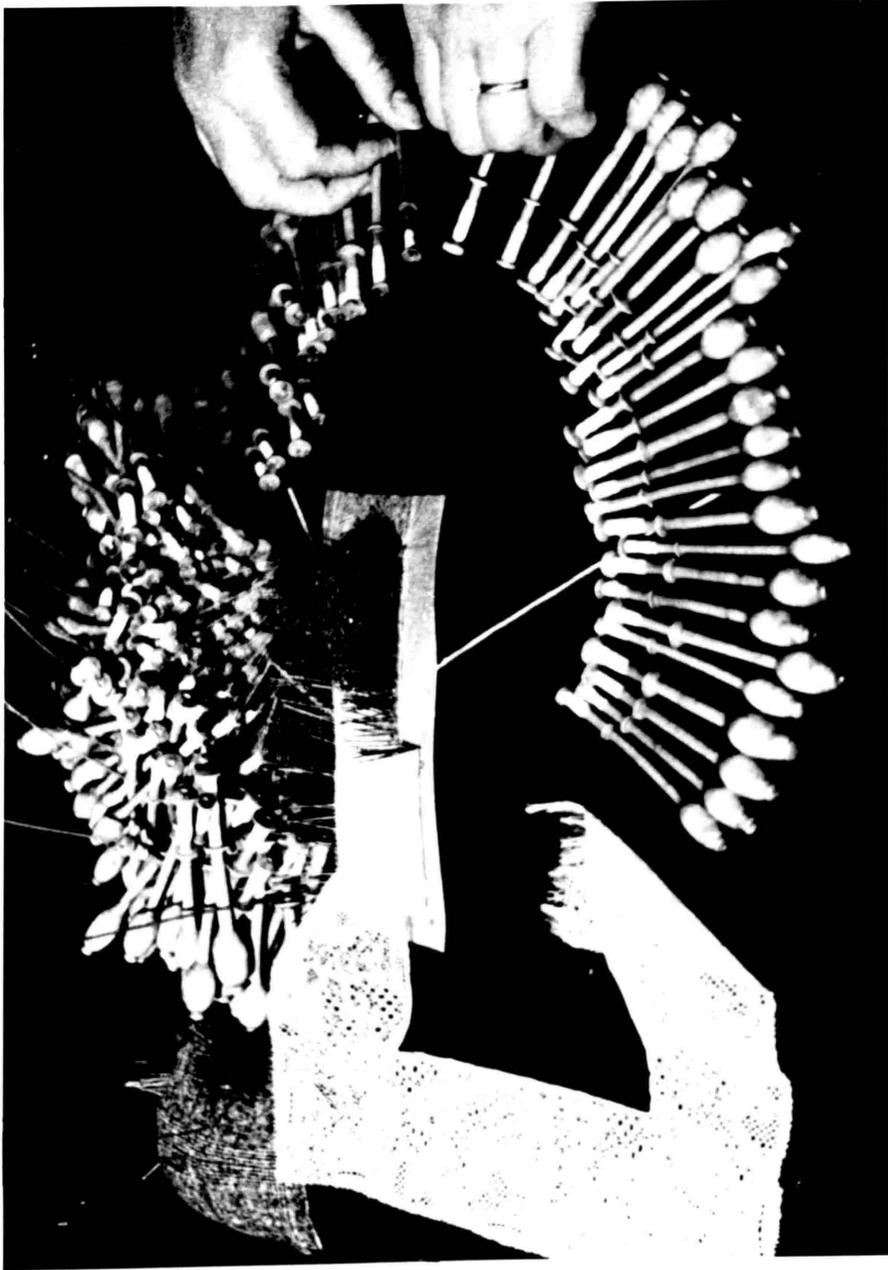
In making bobbin lace, a pattern is first drawn upon a piece of paper or parchment. It is then pricked with holes by a skilled "pattern pricker," who determines where the principle pins shall be stuck for guiding the threads. The pricked pattern is then fastened to the pillow. The threads from bobbins which have been wound, are fastened to the upper part of the pattern. The bobbins are then twisted and plated following the designs of the parchment, and pinned at appointed places. When the work has progressed to the bottom of the pillow many of the pins may be removed and the lower ones along with the lace which they hold, are moved up once again to the top of the pillow. This process continues to the lace's completion.

The distinguishing characteristic then, between needlepoint and bobbin lace, is that the former has the peculiarity of being constructed by means of a single needle and thread, using various forms of one stitch, the button-hole stitch. Its appearance is much harder and more crisp than bobbin lace. The advantage of this technique is that the single thread may be freely turned and twined achieving a maximum of pictorial expression.



SOURCE: Jeanette E. Pethebridge, A Manual of Lace
(London: Cassell, 1947), p. 33.

Fig. 5. Point d'Alençon in the working. Needle-
point Lace.



SOURCE: Virginia Church Bath, Lace (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 147.

Fig. 6. A Belgian bobbin lacemaker.

Needlepoint lace gives the designer perhaps the utmost scope for his imagination.

Bobbin lace on the other hand, is created by the plaiting and twisting of many threads.¹ This technique, although in its earliest stages attempted to follow closely the patterns of needle lace, has a tendency to blur contouring lines and to merge the à jour into the réseau. Charles Blanc compared these divergent methods of lacemaking:

The dominant character of pillow-made lace, is the soft blending of its forms: the needle is to the bobbin what the pencil point is to the stump. The pattern--of which the definition becomes softened when wrought in pillow-lace--is depicted with crispness by the needle.²

Laces were generally named in reference to their geographic execution and thus point de Paris, point de Venise, Valenciennes, etc., all initially bore the name of the place of their origin.³ However, the movement of

¹As many as 1,200 or more threads are used.

²Mary Eirwen Jones, The Romance of Lace (London: Spring Books, n.d.), p. 37.

³Two exceptions to this are: point d'Angleterre, which, because of an act of English Parliament passed in 1662 prohibiting the importation of all foreign laces, was made in Brussels, illegally imported to England and then sold as "English" lace; and point d'Espagne which usually signified gold or silver lace consumed by Spanish grandees, but most often produced by French and Italian manufacture. Palliser, History of Lace, p. 92.

lacemakers as well as the assimilation of patterns and technique caused confusion in identification of lace. Thus, such terms as "vraie," "bâtarde," and "fausse" were often added to laces for their further identification. This additional classification was considered extremely important.

This beautiful manufacture is so inherent in the place, that it is an established fact, if a piece of lace were begun at Valenciennes and finished outside the walls, the part which had not been made a Valenciennes would be visibly less beautiful and less perfect than the other, though continued by the same lace-maker with the same thread, and upon the same pillow.¹

The reason for this peculiar "truth" was that the walls which surrounded Valenciennes were believed to have provided the town with a greater humidity which influenced the tension and plasticity of the worker's thread.

Whether this was demonstratable or not, it is certainly true that each lace had its own distinguishing characteristics both in design and in execution, which caused certain lace industries to be supported and others to decline during particular ages.

¹Ibid., p. 119, citing M. Dieudonné, Statistique du Dép. du Nord, 1804.

Not only was lace a victim of its environment, but also of the thread from which it was made. The fineness of the lace produced in Brussels is almost a fable.

It is made of the flax grown in Brabant, at Hal and Rebecq-Rognon. The finest quality is spun in dark underground rooms, for contact with the dry air caused the thread to break, so fine is it almost to escape the sight. The feel of the thread as it passes through the fingers is the surest guide. The thread-spinner closely examines every inch drawn from her distaff, and when any inequality occurs stops her wheel to repair the mischief. Every artificial help is given to the eye. A background of dark paper is placed to throw out the thread, and the room so arranged as to admit one single ray of light upon the work.¹

Lord Garden writes in 1787, that this thread is so exquisite in fineness that it can be made in no other country and so prized, that from one pound of flax can be spun the value of £700 sterling.¹

¹Palliser, History of Lace, p. 119.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN IN LACE

Lace-making implies the production of ornamentation and fabric concurrently. Without a pattern or design the fabric of lace cannot be made.¹

The basic elements of art used in creating lace designs have traditionally been severely restricted, relying almost exclusively on line as its artistic pre-occupation and the worker's deftness as a measure of its excellence. This rigid simplicity of concentration is juxtaposed both by the complexity of the lace design and by its execution.

Color, appreciated for its capability in soliciting perhaps the most universally immediate response, is almost exclusively used monochromatically in lace.² This severity of use is further compounded by an almost religious reverence for white.³

¹Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Lace."

²Peasant laces, most notably in the Slavic countries, have introduced bright colors into lace, however, at what is generally considered to be the expense of design. These laces are the exceptions.

³Once again, by generalizing, the researcher has excluded descriptions of the use of gold and silver threads. This work, which was popular in Mediaeval times, continued into the Renaissance.

Many explanations, including the improvement in soap and general sanitation, as well as the difficulties in finding color fast dyes for linen, have been used in justifying this phenomenon. However, a more artistically sensitive explanation was introduced by the art historian Moriz Dreger, in 1910, who referred to lace as "the truest child of the Renaissance," exemplifying the Renaissance preference of form over color; its love of unadorned raw materials; and its concept of pattern, in which frame, background, and design are readily distinguishable, each element being an entity in its own right.¹

Texture, which is often used to produce a tactile response to art, is also limited as to its use in lace. The singularity of texture is interrupted solely by the use of a sometimes, slightly padded cordonnet. This creates dimension in degree, reflecting the shallow reliefs of Renaissance sculpture. Decorative pattern, through the manipulated line, is used as invented texture.

Value, in lace, is introduced by means of line. It is used to create pattern and technically is only

¹Edith Appleton Standen, "The Grandeur of Lace," Bulletin: Metropolitan Museum of Art Vol. 16 (January 1958): p. 162, citing Moriz Dreger (Vienna: Entwicklungs-Geshichte der Spitze, 1910).

decorative. The art styles which stress decorative effects often ignore or neglect representation of light.¹ This is true of lace, and thus its concern for value is based on pictorial, imaginative, or most often, formal considerations. This nonrepresentational use of value further emphasizes the interest in a shallow space concept.

Shape, too, is introduced through line, which serves as a continuous edge to figures, objects, and masses. These shapes, as seen in the early laces, tend to be geometrically rectilinear, however, they turn toward biomorphic shapes with the Renaissance.

Line, which is an abstraction developed for simplification of statements, is the elemental ruler in lace. Fineness of thread, the media of lace, creates the possibility for its structural delicacy and its usual lightness of pattern. On the calligraphic character of these lines must finally, and almost entirely, depend the balanced juxtaposition, the certain repetition, the rhythm, and ultimately, the collection of individual parts subservient to the whole.

¹Otto G. Ocvirk et al., Art Fundamentals: Theory and Practice, 2nd ed. (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1968), p. 66.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY OF LACE DESIGN

As the forerunners of lace, punto a reticella, punto tagliato, and punto a maglia quadra, were all fashioned from foundations of perpendicular lines, the early laces which evolved from them were strictly geometrical in configuration. These geometrical laces bear similarities to oriental designs.

Generally speaking, the intarsia or inlaid work, which was in such favor in the 16th century shows in its designs the obvious influence of Eastern art; in many cases, the patterns have been taken directly from Arab sources. The same influence shows itself in the stuffs, embroideries, demascened metalwork, and other objects, of which the industries were naturally directly affected by the importation of Eastern models and Eastern methods.¹

Those principles which were borrowed from the East were interlaced, repeating star-shapes, polygonal ornaments, and crosses all purely geometrical, never naturalistic or combined with figured ornaments. Jourdain claims in her article that this is due to the Mussulman religion which was shy of encouraging

¹M. Jourdain, "Cut Work and Punto in Aria," Connoisseur Vol. II (January-April 1905), p. 13. (East Ardsley: Microform Limited, FN 95701 4, n.d.).

naturalistic art and to the Sunna who forbid the representation of figures in art.¹

Introduced quickly upon these designs were the stiff symmetrical symbolic groups of figures, monsters, sacred animals, and trees, all created in hard square lines. The straight joining, the only one known at the time, necessitated the repetition of these straight lines in tree or fountain. These repeated forms resembled patterns cut out of paper.

Milanese lace of the period had archaically drawn but vigorously treated eagles, hares, bears, and hounds. Jourdain believes that in spirit these scenes can be traced to characteristics of the Lombard, "who according to Ruskin, covered every church he built with expression of his fierce energy and scenes of hunting and war." These incidents are entirely absent from Venetian lace and only experimentally introduced in other laces.²

The earliest points and pillow laces soon passed from the stiff formality of the Gothic period into the flowing lines of the Renaissance. It was not until the

¹Ibid., p. 16.

²M. Jourdain, "Milanese Lace," Connoisseur Vol. 16 (September-December 1906), p. 39. (East Ardsley: Microform Limited, FN 95701 5, n.d.).

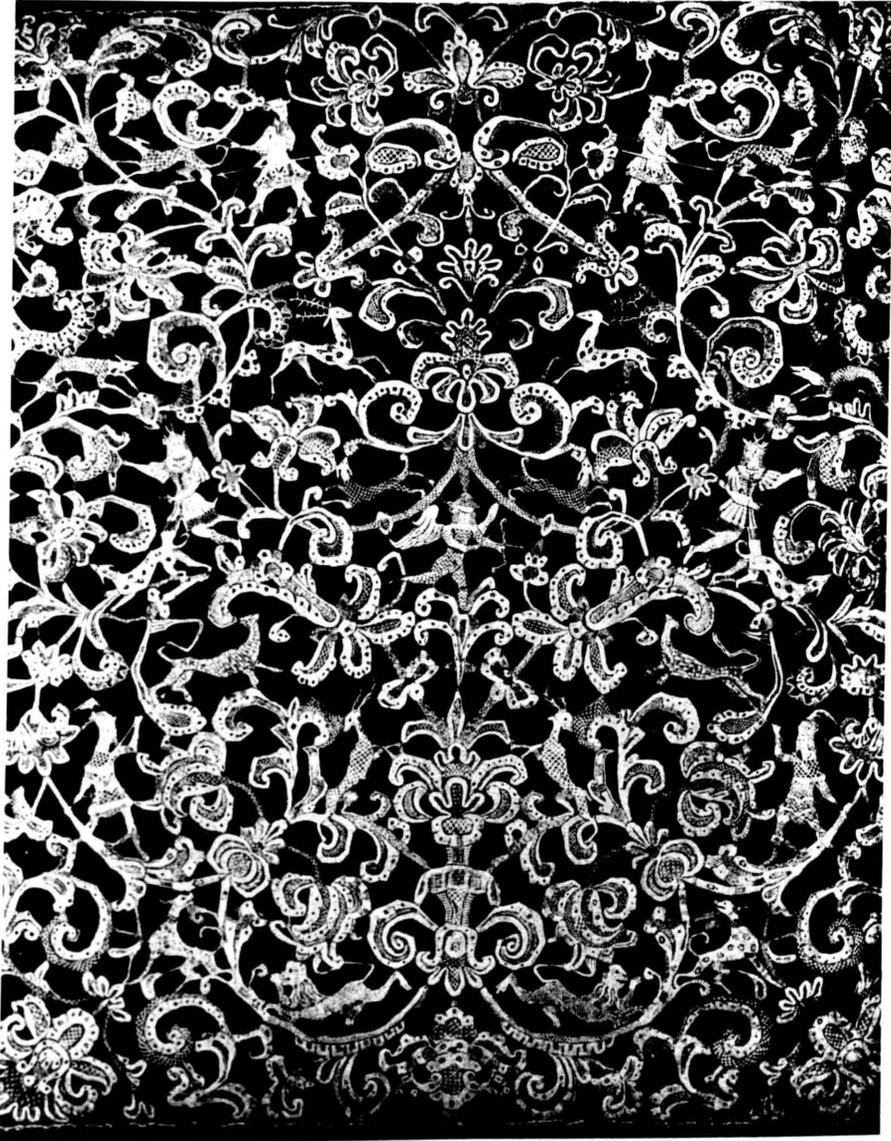
reign of Elizabeth I that Italian cutwork and Venetian lace came into general use.¹ A union existed during this period between the fine arts and the manufacturer, and artists gave their most graceful inspirations to lace. It is often considered that at this period in history both point and bobbin laces were not only the most used, and the most elaborate, but more subjectively, the most beautiful.

The designers' stress was placed upon clarity, symmetry, and stability, with sharp distinctions between pattern, background, and frame.

The rinceau of classical architecture was the major motif used in lace. Its bands of undulant and recurring plant motifs were treated conventionally, mirrored, and joined together by brides. The movement of the branches was never continuous, but constantly interrupted, for the horizontal line was still the major emphasis. The low relief sculptures of this period were imitated by gros point de Venise signalling a movement toward the Baroque.

The singular custom of representing religious subjects, in lace, cutwork, and embroidery became prominent in England toward the end of the reign of

¹Palliser, History of Lace, p. 48.



SOURCE: Mary Eirwen Jones, The Romance of Lace (London: Spring Books, n.d.), p. 169.

Fig. 7. Milanese lace of the Seventeenth Century.

James I. This reflected the Puritan taste, "for flowers now are made church histories."¹

With its exuberant decoration, its expansive curvaceous form, its sense of mass, its delight in large-scale, and its spatially complex compositions, the Baroque created massive, sometimes abstract designs in lace. Roger Fry has stated as characteristic of this style "the utmost possible enlargement of the unit of design." So successful were the lace-makers in carrying out this program that other minor arts of the period often seem to have reflected their achievements. Indeed, one of Gibbons', an English sculptor and carver of the Seventeenth Century, most famous tours-de-force is a reproduction in wood of a lace cravat.²

The flattened collars of the later Seventeenth Century challenged the designers with a more interesting shape than previously encountered. Instead of narrow lace bands with repeating motifs, these collars demanded treatment as a unit.

Gros point de Venise began to give way to a lighter and flatter design in plat point de Venise. This

¹M. Jourdain, "English Lace: Needlepoint," Connoisseur Vol. 16 (September-December 1906), p. 134. (East Ardsley: Microform Limited, FN 97501 5, n.d.).

²Standen, "Grandeur of Lace," p. 157.

pattern still followed a serpentine form, but began to lose much strength through the more exaggerated use of brides, which were placed more closely and unevenly together resembling "the bars in crackle china."¹

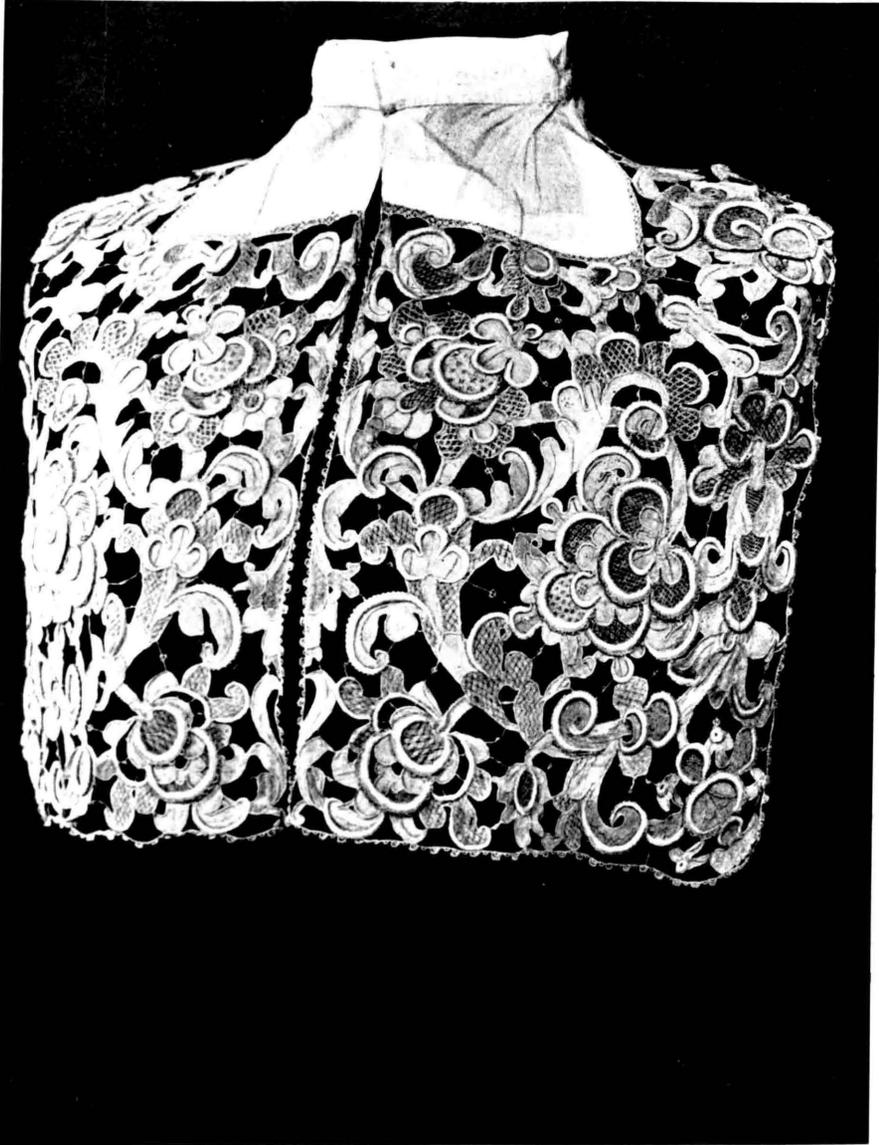
The Rococo devised yet another variation on aesthetic tastes. The introduction of point de Venise à réseau, still created compositions of leaf and floral motifs, however, they became embedded in a réseau. The pattern was no longer held together by brides picotées placed at random, instead the connecting device became a regular six-sided mesh. The design was not outlined by a cordonet and a complexity of modes patterned the toilés.

The desire was for light and delicate grace, asymmetrical and often abstract. As shell-like and choral-like forms with c- and s-curves were popular in the architectural motif of rocaille, so a type of point de Venise was introduced and referred to as Coralline. It was a small irregular pattern supposed to have been copied from coral.²

During the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries, after Corbert's introduction of the Venise

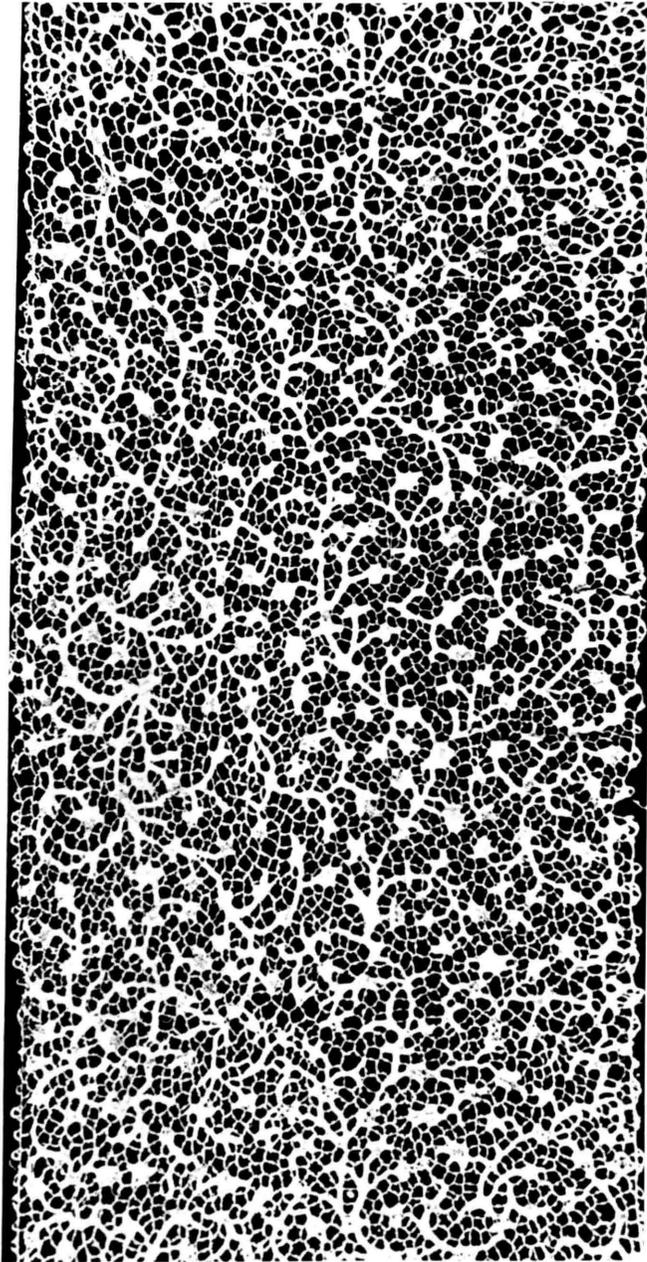
¹Jackson, History of Hand-made Lace, p. 89.

²Palliser, History of Lace, p. 49.



SOURCE: Mary Eirwen Jones, The Romance of Lace (London: Spring Books, n.d.), p. 41.

Fig. 8. Collar of gros point de Venise from the Seventeen Century, housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum.



SOURCE: M. Jourdain, *Old Lace: A Handbook for Collectors* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1908), plate XXXIV.

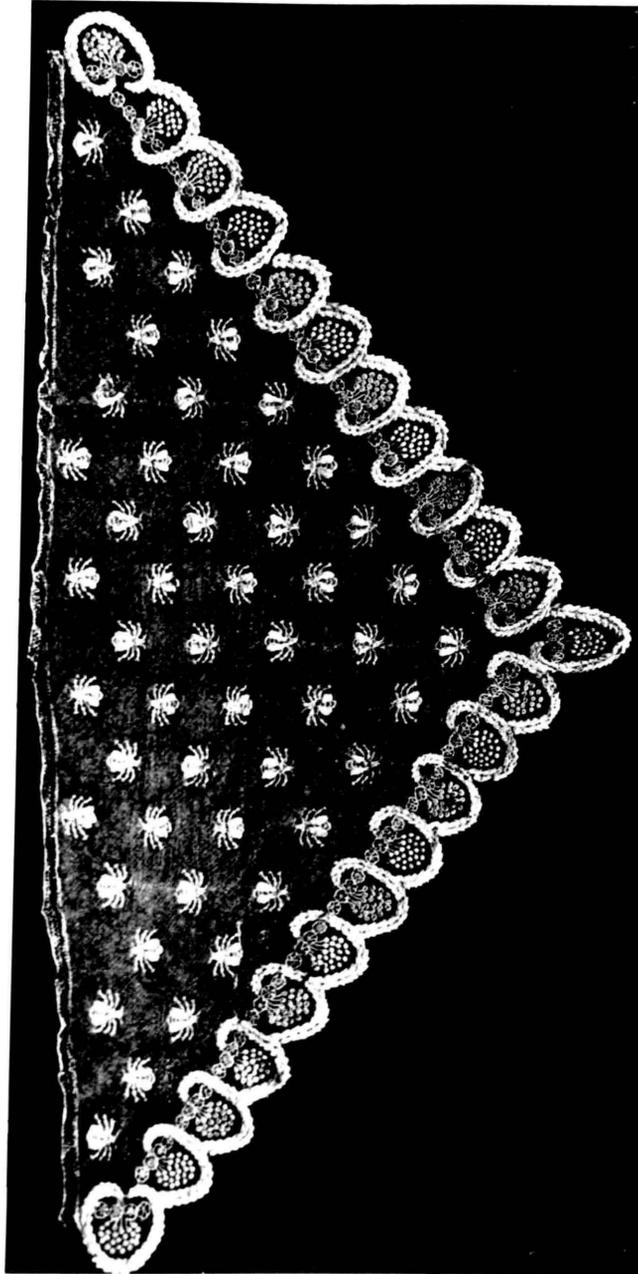
Fig. 9. Italian Coralline point of the late Seventeenth Century or first half of the Eighteenth Century.

points into France in 1665, the French began to challenge the lace production in Venice because of their progressively finer and thinner réseaux. This metamorphosis from brides to réseau increased the importance of ground often at the expense of pattern. However, the French added to lace their love of elegance, lightness, and frivolity.

Great as the beauty of the workmanship of Alençon, it was unable to compete with Brussels in one respect: "its designs were seldom copied from nature, while the fabric of Brabant set forth roses and honeysuckles of a correctness worthy of a Dutch painter."¹

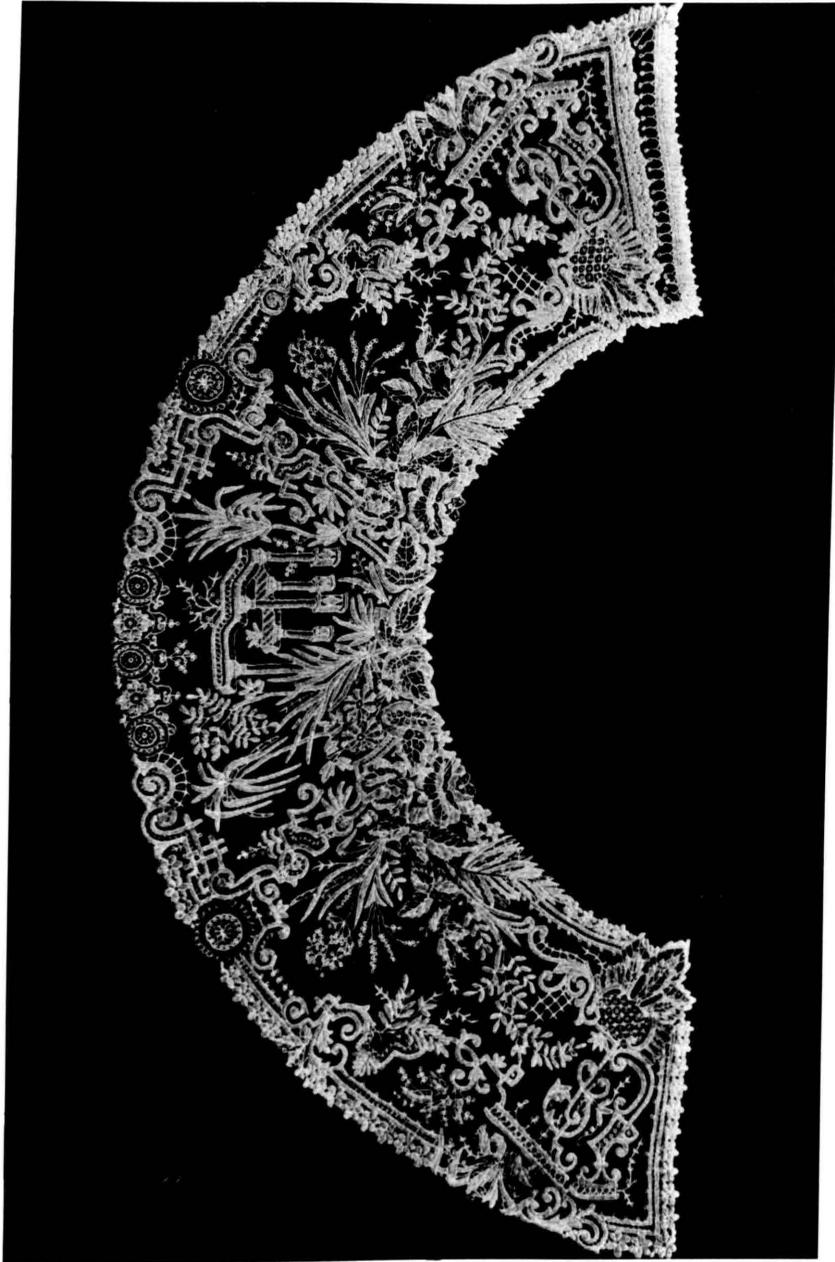
Neo-Classicism, with its noble simplicity and calm grandeur, had its influence too, on lace. It is perhaps most characteristically discernible by its spatiality. The dotted netting became popular, and the design seemed to melt away; the bouquets became sprigs or mere dots; rosettes, tears or insects powdered the surface, replacing the earlier continuous design. Drawn muslin and blonde laces began to supplant the rich old needle points. Palm and pyramidal forms predominated the génre fleuri of the First Empire.

¹Ibid., p. 199.



SOURCE: M. Jourdain, Old Lace: A Handbook for Collectors (London: B.T. Batsford, 1908), plate LXXV.

Fig. 10. Triangular piece of Alecon believed to have belonged to Empress Marie Louise. Empire, about 1810.



SOURCE: Mary Eirwen Jones, The Romance of Lace (London: Spring Books, n.d.), p. 77.

Fig. 11. Fan mount, Brussels' Point de Gaza, mid-Nineteenth Century.

The Nineteenth Century and its Victorianism brought, "masterpieces of exact realism intending to astound the viewer with the triumph over technical difficulties."¹ However, the design, as is often thought of all decorative products in the Nineteenth Century, deteriorated. Continual efforts were made to restore "good taste," but the result was most often an imitation of earlier designs.

The Anti-Gallican Society was founded to correct the taste of foreign manufactures and foster the attitude of artistic beauty toward English laces. One may recognize the practicality of this society as English designers tended toward alteration and adaption of patterns rather than origination. In 1820, Houghton lace-workers were known to have introduced "a most hideous set of patterns, designed, they said, 'out of their own heads.'" These patterns included "'turkey tails,' 'frying pans,' 'bullocks' hearts,' and the most senseless sprigs and borderings."²

¹Palliser, History of Lace, p. 410.

²M. Jourdain, "English Lace: Pillow," Connoisseur Vol. 20 (September-December 1908), p. 2661 (East Ardsley: Microform Limited, FN 95701 6, n.d.).

Shadings and tints, giving lace the relief of a picture, were introduced by M. Beaumé in 1855.¹ The Paris Exhibitions of 1859, 1862, and 1867, acknowledging this addition, pronounced the lace remarkable for the precision of work, the variety and richness of the jours, and clearness of the ground.²

With the Arts and Crafts Movement and its interest in regenerating those declining skills alleviated by modern society, came an attempt to revive interest in both lace-making and lace-designing. Although none of the major figures of this movement have been found directly allied with this endeavour, it nonetheless confederated itself harmoniously with the Arts and Crafts Movement achieving some brevity of success.³

Hand-made lace continued until the First World War, despite increased competition from machine-made copies. Vienna tried to reflect Art Nouveau, but mostly Victorian designs persisted.

The Bauhaus Movement which squelched the Arts and Crafts Movement, also attempted resuscitation, if

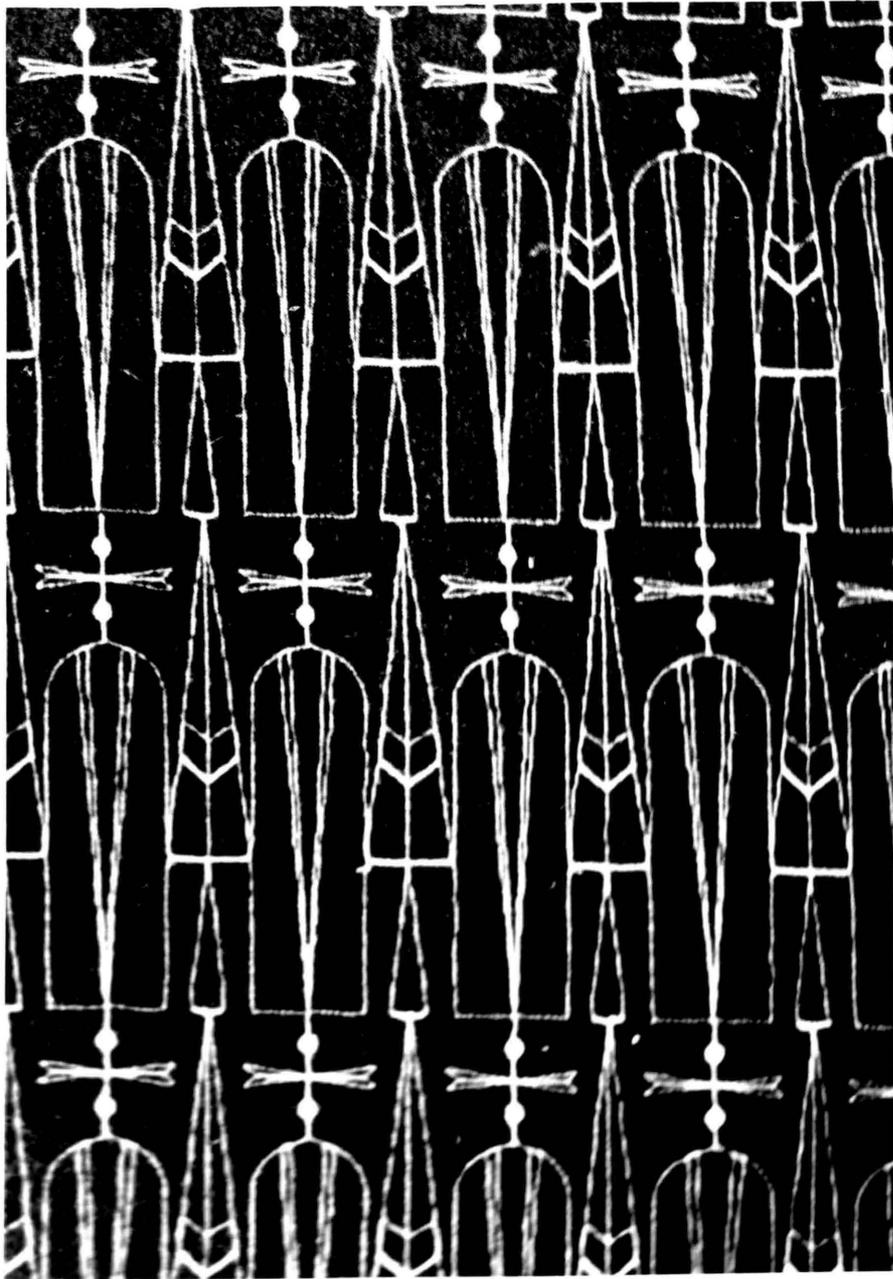
¹Idem., Old Lace: A Handbook for Collectors (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, n.d.), p. 69.

²Palliser, History of Lace, p. 123.

³Anthea Callen, Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), p.

only by way of footnotes, to lace;¹ once again, its success was exiguous.

¹Virginia Church Bath, Lace (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 5.



SOURCE: Virginia Church Bath, Lace (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 17.

Fig. 12. Curtain made in Germany at the Bauhaus, about 1920. Machine-made net with darned pattern. It is housed in the Art Institute of Chicago.

CHAPTER V

LACE DESIGNERS

The almost unknown, but truly instructive and fascinating story concerning antique laces tells of a noble and devoted art closely allied to architecture, fine furniture and decorative hangings of every variety.¹

This relationship between the divergent arts can easily be explained in regards to lace. Although the names of relatively few lace designers remain, those which have survived into the present, are better remembered as painters, sculptors, or carvers than as lace designers. Thus, the same men who created the more proverbial art works were often those men whose influence is a part of the history of lace designs.

Lace followed its contemporary major and minor art forms in its application of design theory. Or, if Napoleon were correct in his exclamation upon first seeing the spire of the Antwerp Cathedral, "C'est come la dentelle de Malines!"² other art forms may be said to

¹Harris, "Laces and Architecture," p. 365.

²Palliser, History of Lace, p. 128.

have attempted the emulation of lace. Whichever is the most true, the relationship is nonetheless apparent.

Pattern books, a means of ascertaining the names of lace designers, first appear in 1524.¹ These books, however, combined designs for embroidery and lacis. It was not until 1530 that a book by Antonio Taglienti first appeared with designs for punto in aria. The earliest bobbin lace book, Le Pompe, was published in Venice in 1557.

One of the earliest and perhaps most prominent lace designer was Federico Vinciolo. He was brought from Florence in Catherine de Medicis' train to France in 1535. She, as his French patroness, granted him in 1585, the exclusive privilege of making and selling the fluted patterns called collerettes gaudronnees. These patterns, which were more generally used to fashion cut work and drawn work, passed through many editions, dating from 1587 to 1623. The work was in two books: the first of Point Coupé with rich geometric patterns printed on white paper upon black ground; the second of Lacis, or subjects in squares.²

¹The earliest dated pattern book known was printed at Zwickau by Johann Schonsperger on October 22, 1524.

²Palliser, History of Lace, p. 17, 18.

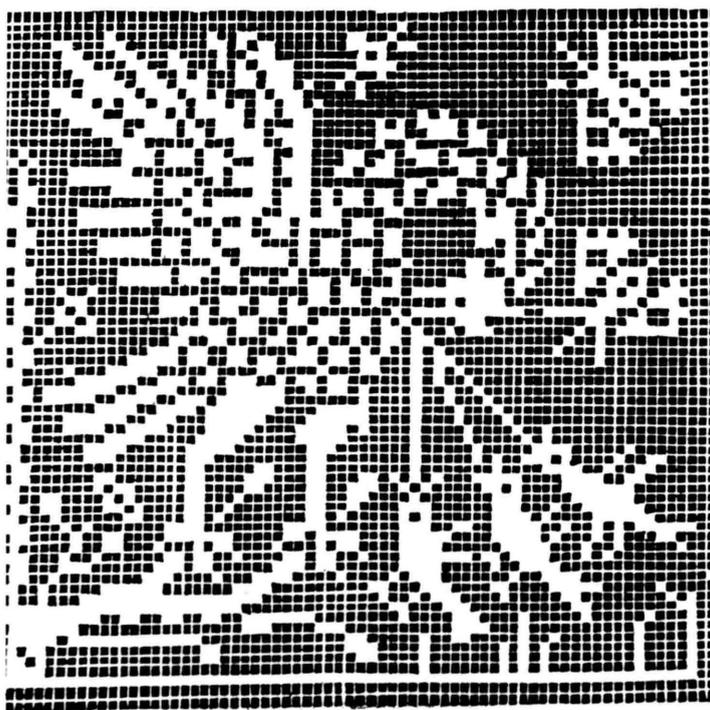
Jean Bérain (1638-1711), a Paris born painter, was appointed "dessinateur de la Chambre et du Cabinet du Roi," in 1674 and was responsible for designing scenery and costumes for the court fêtes and ballets under Louis XIV. His lace designs turned lace patterns away from all-over, large-flowered compositions toward more tectonic designs.¹

Indeed, all the artists who furnished designs for works undertaken for the Court of Louis XIV, most likely also supplied patterns for the Royal manufacture of lace. Payments are noted by Jourdain to have gone to Bonnemer (1637-1687), a painter and engraver who worked on the ceiling of the gallery of the King's Audience Chamber in Tuileries, and to Bailly, also a painter and engraver.²

Such designs were jealously protected. An ordinance of August 15, 1665, founded manufacture of points de France with exclusive privilege, the designs being drawn by artists under state control. The company realized enormous profit until 1675, at the expiration of this privilege. Afterward, "fabricants" had designs

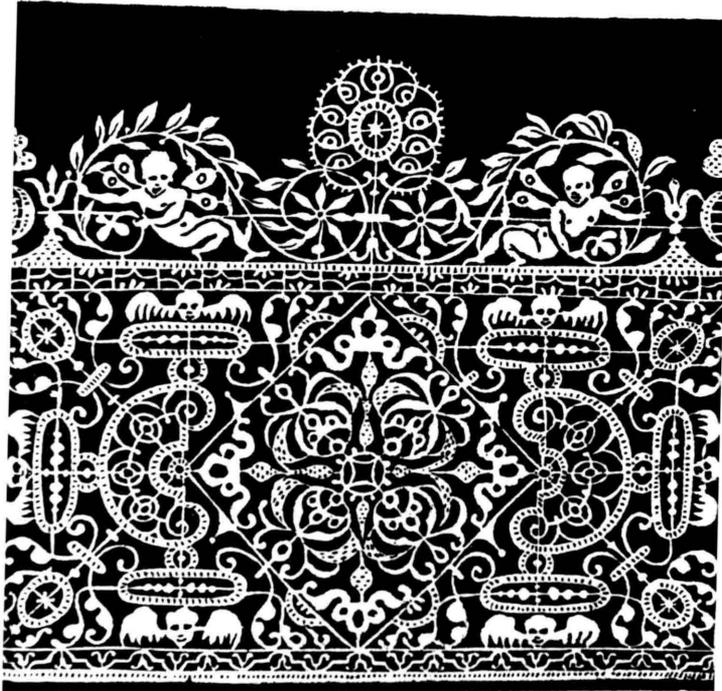
¹Bath, Lace, p. 5.

²M. Jourdain, "Alençon," Connoisseur Vol. 16 (January-April 1906), p. 96. (East Ardsley: Microform Limited, FN 95701 5, n.d.).



SOURCE: Federico Vinciolo, Singuliers et Nouveaux Pourtraicts (Paris: Jean Leclerc, 1587; rpt. ed., Renaissance Patterns for Lace, Embroidery and Needlepoint (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971), p. 86.

Fig. 13. Le Pelican, designed by Federico Vinciolo.



SOURCE: Federico Vinciolo, Singuliers et Nouveaux Pourtraicts (Paris: Jean Leclerc, 1587; rpt. ed., Renaissance Patterns for Lace, Embroidery and Needlepoint (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971), p. 32.

Fig. 14. Needlework in point coupe, designed by Federico Vinciolo.

specially made for them, which became their exclusive property.¹

Except for a few books and sets of engraved plates, patterns were no longer published. However, pattern books did reappear in the last decade of the Eighteenth Century.

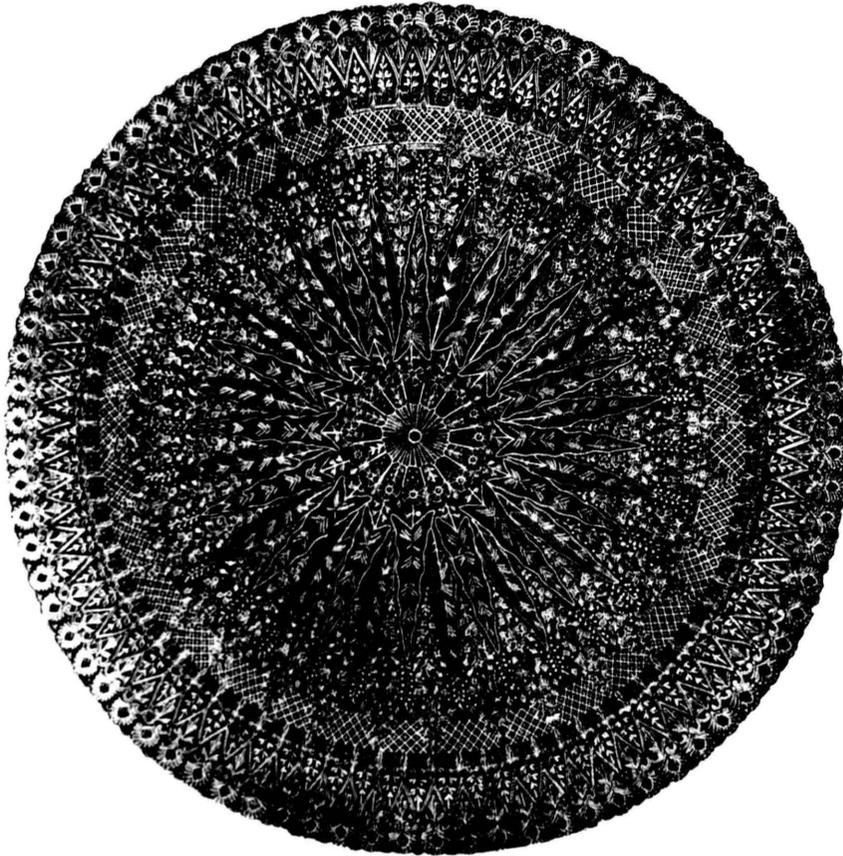
Jean-Baptiste Pillement (1728-1808), a painter, created designs which were printed on cotton by Oberkampf in 1760 at Jouy. These designs were used in all forms of the decorative arts, for wood and metal work, as well as for needlework.²

Alcide Roussel, an important designer of the Nineteenth Century, created designs of "characteristic flower forms, with nearly curling tendrils," less free than Baroque laces. The repeating designs were smaller and the stitches not so closely worked. He won medals in Brussels in 1856 and his designs were entered in the Paris Exhibition in 1865.³

¹M. Jourdain, "Alencon," p. 96.

²Lowe, "Pattern Books," p. 17.

³Patricia Wardle, Victorian Lace (London: Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 1968), p. 58.



SOURCE: Patricia Wardle, Victorian Lace
(London: Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 1968), p. 93.

Fig. 15. Parasol cover of Alençon, designed
by Alcide Roussel and shown at the Paris Interna-
tional Exhibition of 1867.

CHAPTER VI

FINAL PROJECTS

Project No. I

The purpose of this project was to produce a lace piece which had firmly established affiliations to those historic laces which the researcher had been studying.

The project was done using the needlepoint technique,¹ with Irish linen thread #100 for the oblique cordonnnet, and #75 for the rèseau and the toilé. The researcher followed the general style of point de Bruxelles. The stitches used, all variations on the buttonhole stitch, were the Venetian cloth stitch, the Brussels stitch, the Bar stitch and the Hollie stitch, grouped in units of three.

Although this lace piece was traditionally executed, the researcher made what was believed to be appropriate changes in style. The conceptual design was based upon an embroidery motif found in a copy of The Delineator published around the turn of this century. This motif was enlarged, expanded, and made more irregular.

¹For this technique see page 20 above.

The traditional placement of darks and lights or the pattern of gradation was also altered. Historically the greatest concentration of thread and therefore, conversely, the lightest value, as white thread was almost exclusively used, was found in the major motive of the toilé. The next greatest concentration of thread was used in the minor motives, or, at a later period in lace history, for the lighter shaded effects within the primary motive. The next lightest was used in the réseau, and finally the à jour generally consisted of the least thread and thus the darkest value or greatest negative space.

In the researcher's study, this system of progressive shading based on pictorial importance was revised. As the historical concern for the use of value was not based upon representational considerations, the researcher felt unrestricted in experimenting with this aspect.

In the researcher's lace piece, which contains the traditional number of varying values, the following sequence was used: The lightest value was placed upon a minor motive, the leaf; the next lightest, upon the réseau; the next, upon the toilé; and the last; upon another minor motive, the stem. The à jour was neglected completely. Thus, the value system was divorced

completely from not only its representational use, but also from its pictorial importance.

The lace was applied to a linen center foundation further securing its affinity with traditional laces and further establishing the inconspicuous antithesis between execution and design.

Project No. II

The researcher, having become aware through this study, of the gaining attention which was being placed upon the réseau during the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries at the expense of pattern, believes that this evolutionary trend, had it continued uninterrupted by the Industrial Revolution, might well have ended in the complete evanescence of the toilé and thus the supremacy of the ground.

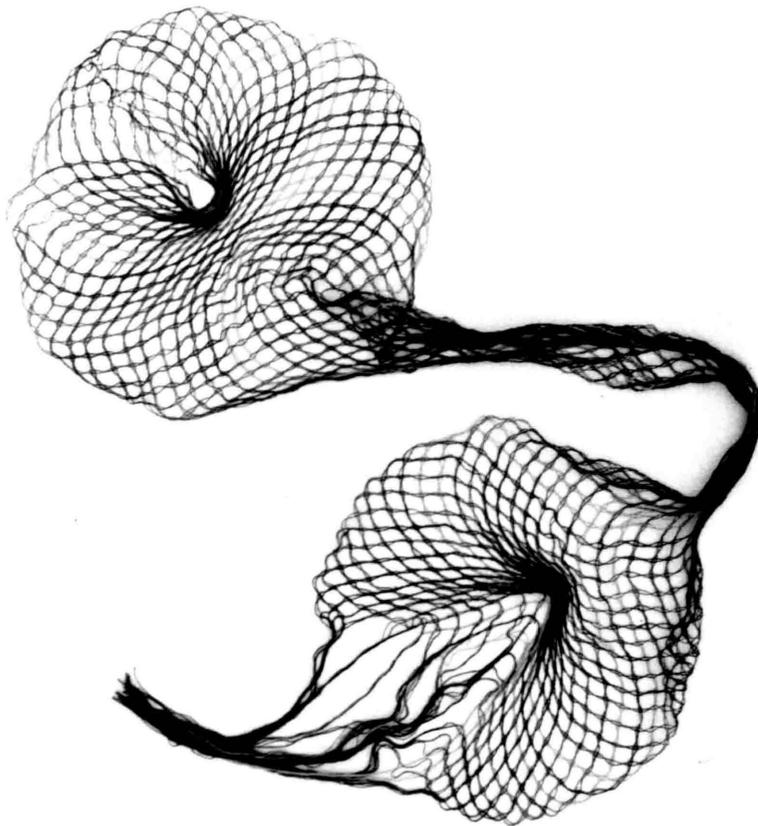
With this possibility established, the researcher chose, as a second project, to eliminate the embedded pattern completely, and to concentrate on the ground.

As the researcher simplified the traditional concept of lace by omitting the pattern, the researcher decided to simultaneously complicate its concept by introducing color into the design.

For this project, single strand embroidery floss was used in spectral colors. Plain hole bobbin ground



Project No. I



Project No. II

was executed to a width of six inches. No engrêlure was incorporated into the ground. Omitting this, gave the lace flexibility enough to facilitate curves and through such curves, gradations of value created by concentration of thread.

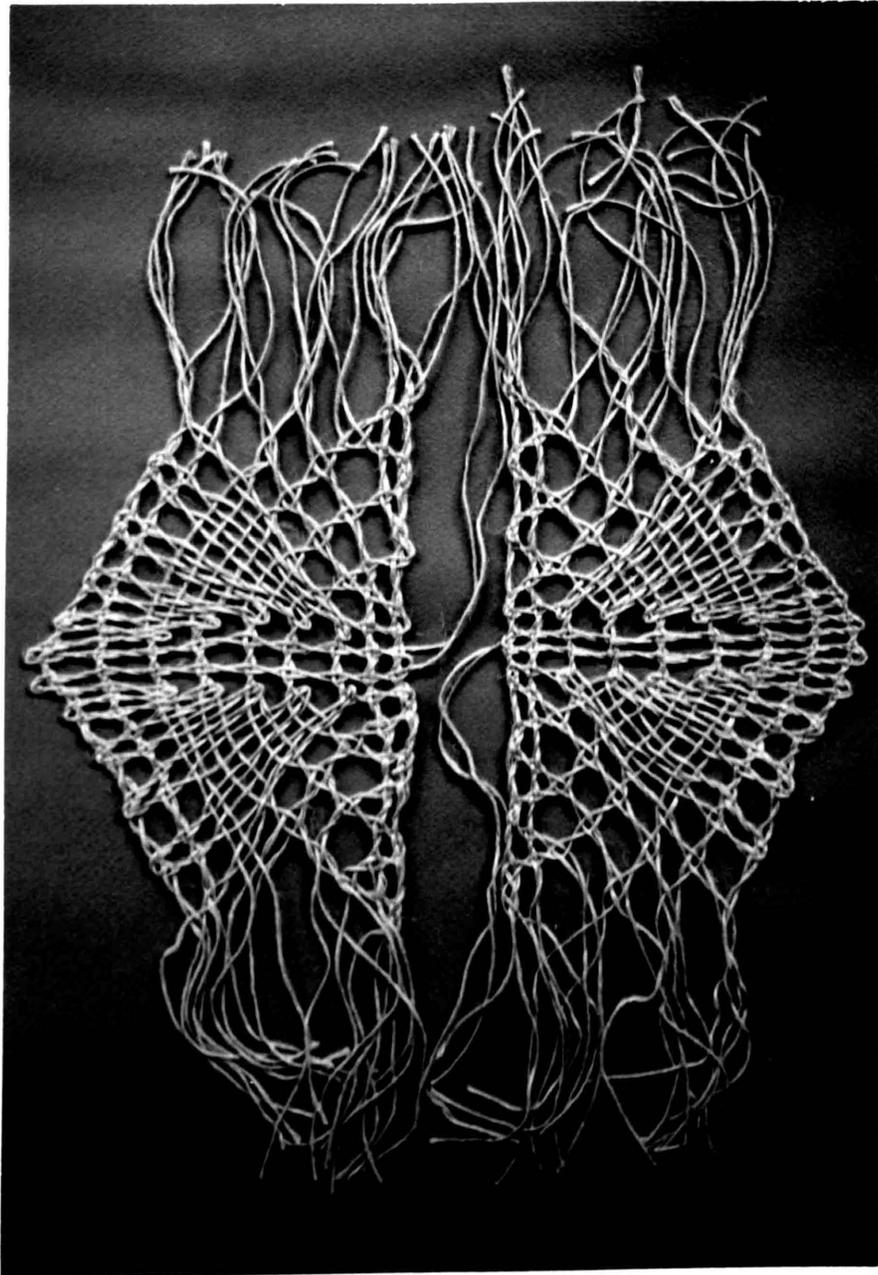
In this study too, can be seen the linear movement of color throughout the lace piece.

As design was not incorporated into the lace, the researcher thought that the piece itself could establish its own design through form.

Project No. III

In experimenting with the basic elements of art as found in lace, the researcher decided in one study, to concentrate upon texture.

The fable fine thread produced in Belgium and used to create all the most intricate laces throughout Europe, was substituted by the researcher for unbleached linen cord. A traditional Torchon pattern, referred to as Smyrna, was used. Only one unit of this pattern was produced and another unit of the pattern was reproduced in reverse, thus creating a bisymmetrical image with a narrow vertical band of negative space in the center.



Project No. III

Project No. IV

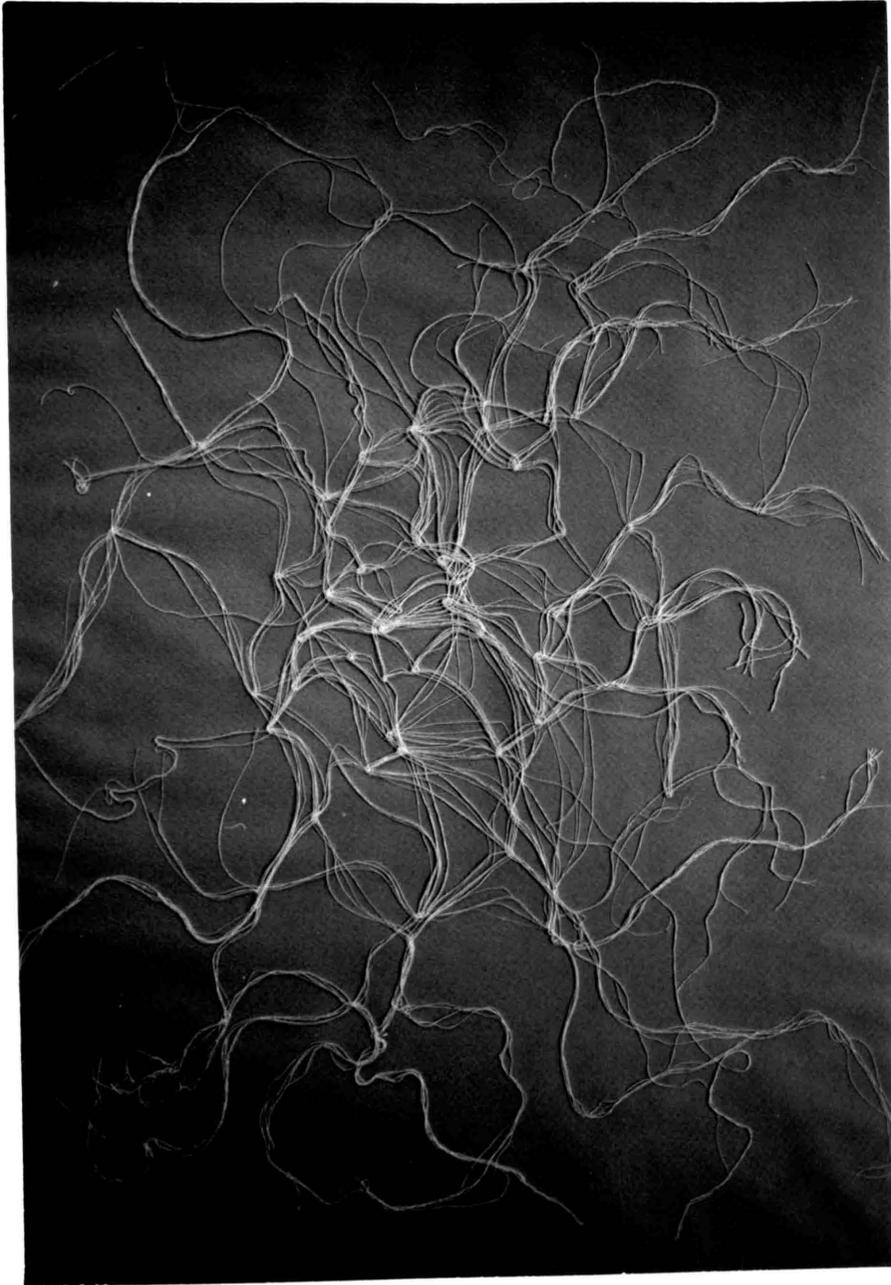
Modern lacemakers have almost exclusively concentrated in their work upon the linear aspect involved in lace. The researcher felt that she too had a statement to make in this regard.

The piece which evolved after experimentations in this direction was executed with bobbins upon a large square board of styrofoam core, as the bobbin pillow was not large enough to accommodate this project. Variations on the Torchon spider pattern were made with threads of Swiss ramie, American wool, cotton embroidery floss, Irish linen #50 and #100/2, basting cotton, Swedish linen #80 and #100, and crochet cotton #70 and #25.

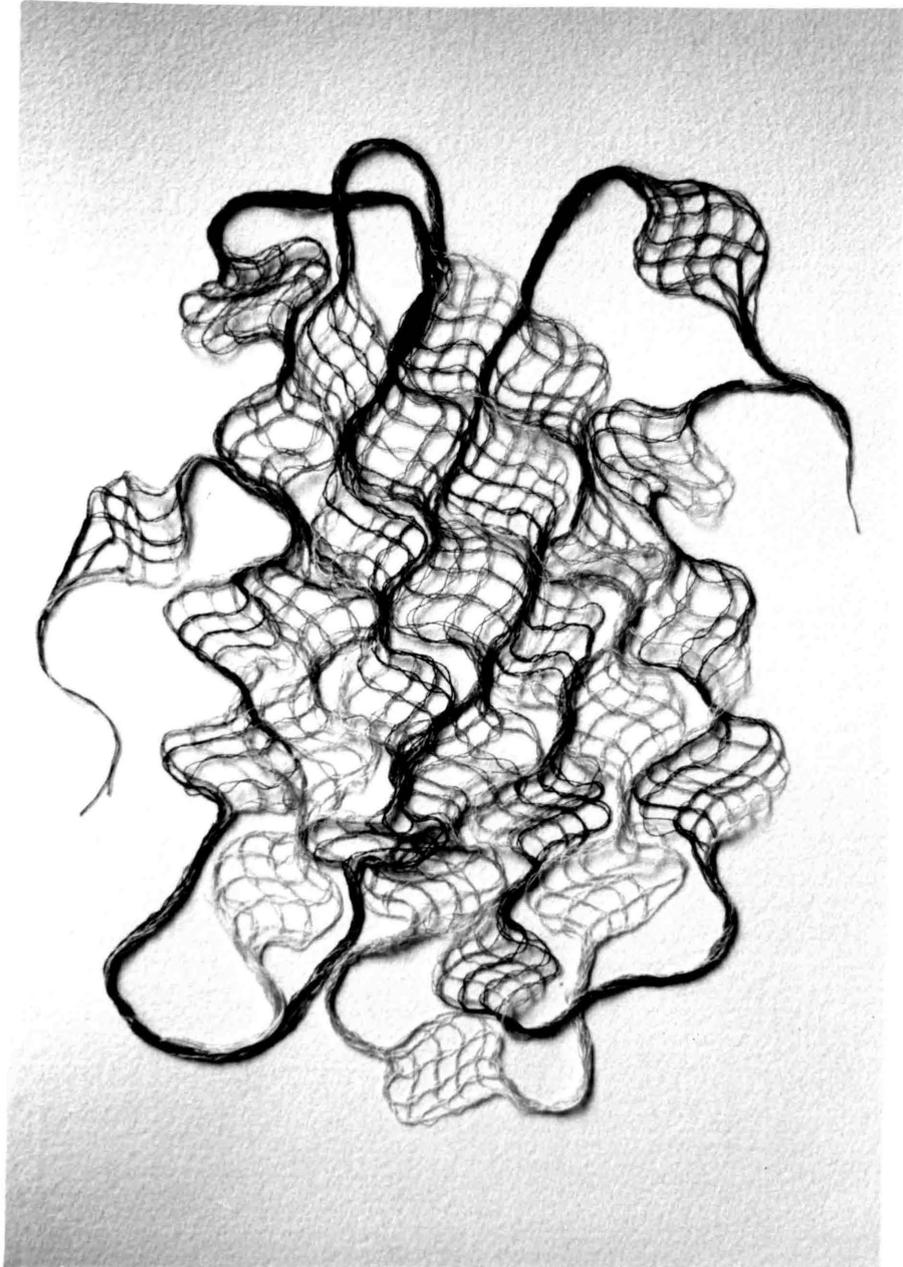
These threads were chosen because of their somewhat oblique variations of color, texture, and sheen.

Project No. V

As the researcher considered Project No. II as perhaps the most experimentally successful, an additional project following its procedure was executed. Through experimentation with the diverse grounds available to the bobbin lace technique, it was found that only plain hole ground facilitated enough flexibility for curving forms and gradations of value created by concentration of threads.



Project No. IV



Project No. V

Therefore, once again, plain hole ground was executed, however, this time two sections of 4-inch widths were produced in single strand embroidery floss. Five shades of green thread were used in one 4-inch section of lace. The other section consisted of 20 purple threads, each being individually gradated. The two sections were interlaced and were formed into a oscillatory pattern, each section irregularly filling the negative space of the other.

Conclusion

Through the course of this paper, the researcher has investigated the social history involved in the creation, the propagation, and the elimination of lace as it was known. Not only did it become stigmatized by its association with the aristocracy, but it became a victim of its major virtue; its delicacy demanded such time intensity that the democratic and socialistic states, which followed the years of divine rule, could not and cared not to support it.

This investigation has shown that lace was capable of bearing the formalities and freedoms aesthetically valued in each age; it reflected the stability and horizontal preferences of the Gothic age as easily as it

reflected the movement and exuberant decoration enjoyed by the Rococo.

An affinity was shown to have evolved between lace and other art forms due to accommodating lace designers who possessed a variety of art backgrounds. Their skill elevated lace to a major art and it received for however briefly, its due attention, prestige, and respect.

The elements of art have been traced through their somewhat rigidly prescribed traditional application and through the extension of lace theories contemporary lace pieces have evolved.

In conclusion, the researcher believes that lace technique offers unexplored ground and an infinite variety of potential for modern self-expression. An artist needs only an historical perspective, imagination, time, and patience to recreate lace as a viable art form.

APPENDIX

LACE CHART

	Origin or Type		Appearance of Ground					Texture of Design								
	Silk ground	Embroidered Crochet	Knotted Appliqué	Bobbin Needle point	Guipure	Plain or dotted net	Cane seat	Double cane seat and snow ball	Woven	Knotted	Bars, twisted, braided, buttonhole stitch	Cordonnet	Embroidered	Woven or cloth like	Buttonhole stitch	Braid effect
Alençon.....					x	s	x				s	x	x	x		
Argentan.....					x		x					x	x	x		
Armenian.....			x						x					None		
Binche.....				x				x				s	x			
Breton.....	x						x					x	x			
Bruges.....				x	x					x		x				x
Buratto.....	x							x					x			
Carrickmacross.			s		s	s				s			x			
Chantilly.....	x			x		x					x		x			
Ciré.....	x									x			x		s	
Cluny.....				x	x					x			x			
Duchesse.....				x	x					x		x	x		x	
Filet.....			x						x			s	x			
Irish.....		x			s					s						x
Margot.....	x	x				x							x			
Mechlin.....				x		x						x	x			
Milan.....				x	s	s				s					x	
Point de Paris.				x			x					x	x			
Princess.....			s		s	s				s					x	
Renaissance....					x					x					x	
Rose Point.....					x		x					x	x	x		
Torchon.....				x	x					x			x			
Valenciennes...				x			x						x			
Venise.....					x	x				x		x	x	x		

S = Sometimes.

SOURCE: Jessie F. Caplin, The Lace Book (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), p. 159.

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